



Hearing Instrument Consumers Rights

The Board of Hearing & Speech

The Board of Hearing and Speech was created by the Washington State Legislature to protect the public's health and safety. The board regulates the competency and quality of the professional health care providers under their jurisdiction including hearing instrument fitter/dispensers, audiologists, and speech-language pathologists. The board establishes rules, policies, and procedures relating to their profession, credentials and disciplines providers. The board is comprised of two hearing instrument fitter/dispensers, two audiologists, two speech-language pathologists, three public members, and one medical physician. Board members are appointed by the Governor to serve three-year terms.

What are qualifications for Hearing Instrument Fitter/Dispensers?

Applicants for licensure as a hearing instrument fitter/dispenser in Washington State must have satisfactorily completed a minimum two-year degree program in hearing instrument fitter/dispenser instruction. All qualified applicants must pass a national examination. Effective July 22, 2007, an applicant from out-of-state must have actively practiced for at least 48 of the past 60 months. They must also hold an unrevoked, unsuspended license in a jurisdiction with licensing standards substantially equivalent to that of Washington State. All applicants must be in compliance with the Uniform Disciplinary Act.

What are the qualifications for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists?

Applicants for licensure as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in Washington State must hold a masters or doctorate degree from a board approved institution of higher education. They must have also completed postgraduate professional work experience with a board approved supervisor and be in compliance with the Uniform Disciplinary Act. All qualified applicants must pass a national examination.

What are my rights as a client?

As the client, you have the right to fully understand what is being done and why. You have the right to ask your provider about your evaluation. You may wish to take a family member or friend to your appointment. You have the right to ethical and professional treatment regardless of your age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability. In addition, you have the right to a clear and written description of the services, fees, and billing information. The receipt required by any person engaging in the practice of fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments must include the following information: seller's name, signature, license or permit number, address and phone number of their regular place of business, a description of the instrument furnished including make, model, circuit options, the term "used" or "reconditioned" if applicable, and serial number. Client records are confidential and, with few exceptions, may not be released by the provider without the client's consent.

How do I check the credential of my healthcare provider?

You may check the credential status of any healthcare provider online. Just visit the Department of Health web-site at www.doh.wa.gov to access our Provider Credential Search function. You can also call our Customer Service Center at (360) 236-4700 or write Department of Health, Customer Service Center, PO Box 47865, Olympia, WA 98504-7865. They will be able to verify the status of a credential and if disciplinary action has been taken.

What is the rescission period?

The rescission period is the 30-day period following the fitting of an instrument. During this period, the instrument can be returned for reasonable cause. It must be in its original condition, less normal wear and tear. The client is entitled to a full refund within ten business days. The seller must refund all deposits, including any down payment. The seller has the right to deduct 15% of the total purchase price or \$150.00 per instrument, whichever is less. If at any time during these 30 days the instrument is returned for modification or repair, this time will not be counted as part of the rescission period. Clients are advised to keep copies of all contracts, dates, and types of services received.

What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about your provider, you may contact the Board if they:

- Misled or lied about the services or instrument dispensed, rescission rights, the care you received, or the financial aspects of your evaluation and fitting.
- Treated you while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Abused or mistreated you in any way.
- Released information without your consent.
- Were negligent in your treatment.

What happens after I file a complaint?

The Board of Hearing and Speech is authorized by State law to discipline fitter/ dispensers, audiologists, and speech-language pathologists who are found to be in violation of the Washington State laws and rules relating to hearing and speech. All complaints are reviewed. If needed, an investigation may include reviewing the client records and interviewing all persons involved in the complaint. A decision regarding the complaint is based on the information the Board has gathered. If the provider is found in violation, there are several actions the Board may take. If the provider is not found in violation, no action will be taken and the complaint will be closed.

Additional Information

For additional information on the Board of Hearing and Speech, visit the Department of Health web-site at www.doh.wa.gov. The laws and rules governing hearing and speech are chapter 18.35 RCW and chapter 246-828 WAC.

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